

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

Favorable reconsideration of this application in view of the above amendments and in light of the following discussion is respectfully requested.

Claims 1-124 are pending. The present Amendment amends Claims 1-4, 7, 19-21, 25-28, 31, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62-64, 66, 77, 78, 81, 83-88, 100, 103, 105, 111, 113, 116, 119, and 121; and adds Claim 124 without introducing any new matter.

The outstanding Office Action rejected Claims 1-7, 19-21, 25-31, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62-66, 77-79, 81, 83-88, 100, 103, 105, 111, 113, 116, 119, and 121 under 35 U.S.C. § 102(e) as anticipated by McFadden (U.S. Patent Application No. 2003/0126137).

Initially, Applicants acknowledge with appreciation the courtesy of Examiner Timblin to interview this case with Applicants' representatives on April 18, 2007, during which time the issues in the outstanding Office Action were discussed as substantially summarized hereinafter and also on the Interview Summary. During the interview, independent Claim 1, new Claim 124, and the McFadden reference were discussed. Following from that discussion, Claims 1-4, 7, 19-21, 25-28, 31, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62-64, 66, 77, 78, 81, 83-88, 100, 103, 105, 111, 113, 116, 119, and 121 are amended and Claim 124 is added.

The outstanding Office Action acknowledges that Claims 1-7, 19-21, 25-31, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62-66, 77-79, 81, 83-88, 100, 103, 105, 111, 113, 116, 119, and 121 were provisionally elected by Applicants with traverse on November, 2, 2006. The Office Action indicates that these claims are pending, but does not indicate whether the Restriction Requirement mailed October 2, 2007 has been made final and does not indicate the status of Claims 8-18, 22-24, 32-43, 45, 47, 51, 53, 55, 57, 59, 61, 67-76, 80, 82, 89-99, 101, 102, 104, 106-110, 112, 114, 115, 117, 118, 120, 122, and 123. Applicants respectfully

request that the status of the claims and the Restriction Requirement be clarified in the next Office Action.

The outstanding Office Action acknowledges Applicants' claim for foreign priority based on JP 2003-017922, JP 2003-017923, JP 2004-011068, and JP 2004-011069, but notes that certified copies of these applications have not been filed. However, certified copies of JP 2003-017922, JP 2003-017923, JP 2004-011068, and JP 2004-011069 were filed on July 14, 2004, as evidenced by the attached copy of the date-stamped filing receipt filed together with this amendment. Accordingly, Applicants respectfully request that the next Office Action indicate that certified copies of all of the priority documents have been received.

Claims 1-4, 7, 19-21, 25-28, 31, 44, 46, 48, 50, 52, 54, 56, 58, 60, 62-64, 66, 77, 78, 81, 83-88, 100, 103, 105, 111, 113, 116, 119, and 121 are amended. These amendments address matters of form and find support in the Claims themselves. Additionally, support for these amendments can be found, for example, at page 65, line 18 to page 69, line 8 of the specification as originally filed with reference to Figure 19. Accordingly, these amendments do not raise a question of new matter.

New Claim 124 is submitted. New Claim 124 finds support at least at page 65, line 18 to page 69, line 8 of the specification as originally filed with reference to Figure 19, for example. Thus, new Claim 124 does not raise a question of new matter.

Claim 1, as amended, recites:

A merge information providing apparatus comprising:  
a plurality of means for providing user information  
regarding a user; and  
means for acquiring *said user information regarding  
said user* from each of *said plurality of user information  
providing means* and *merging said acquired user information*  
regarding said user.

Turning to the applied reference, McFadden relates to dynamic group generation management. As illustrated in Figure 1, a dynamic group management system (12) includes

synchronizer programs (50, 52) on hub and spoke computers (14, 16).<sup>1</sup> As described at paragraph 45, the synchronizer programs maintain synchronization between the respective user and group records on hub and spoke computers, as well as updating group memberships to reflect changes made to the user records in the user databases. The synchronizer programs may be configured to perform various tasks on a periodic basis, or may be configured to perform certain tasks in response to certain events. For example, an update to a dynamic group may be triggered by an addition or deletion of a user record in a user database.

However, McFadden fails to disclose or render obvious acquiring *user information regarding a user* from each of a *plurality of user information providing means* and *merging the acquired user information regarding that user*. By contrast, McFadden updates group memberships in multiple databases, ensuring that all the databases include the same membership information. McFadden does not describe that user information regarding a user is *acquired from each of the separate databases and then merged*. Thus, McFadden fails to disclose or render obvious acquiring *user information regarding a user* from each of a *plurality of user information providing means* and *merging the acquired user information* for that user. Accordingly, as McFadden does not disclose or suggest the features of amended independent Claim 1, it is submitted that amended independent Claim 1 and the claims depending therefrom are in condition for allowance.

Amended Claim 19 recites, *inter alia*:

means for providing *information regarding a designated user* in response to a request from a merge user information providing apparatus,  
wherein said merge user information providing apparatus includes said user information providing means and other user information providing means that are subordinate to said merge user information providing means.

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<sup>1</sup> See McFadden, at paragraph [0045].

McFadden fails to disclose or render obvious a means for providing information regarding a *designated user* in response to a request from a merge user information providing apparatus. As discussed above, McFadden describes maintaining synchronization between a respective user and *group records* on hub and spoke computers. Maintaining *group record* information is not information regarding a *designated user*. Accordingly, as McFadden does not disclose or suggest the features of amended independent Claim 19, it is submitted that amended independent Claim 19 and the claims depending therefrom are in condition for allowance.

Amended Claim 25 recites, *inter alia*:

means for acquiring *said user information regarding said user* from each of said plurality of user information providing means and *merging said acquired user information* regarding said user.

As discussed above with reference to amended Claim 1, McFadden fails to disclose or render obvious acquiring *user information regarding a user* from each of a *plurality of user information providing means* and *merging the acquired user information regarding that user*. Accordingly, as McFadden does not disclose or suggest the features of amended independent Claim 25, it is submitted that amended independent Claim 25 and the claims depending therefrom are in condition for allowance.

Each of amended Claims 44, 48, 50, 54, 56, and 60 recite, *inter alia*:

acquiring said user information regarding said user from each of said plurality of user information providing means; and  
merging said acquired user information regarding said user.

As discussed above with reference to amended Claim 1, McFadden fails to disclose or render obvious acquiring *user information regarding a user* from each of a *plurality of user information providing means* and *merging the acquired user information regarding that user*. Accordingly, as McFadden does not disclose or suggest the features of amended

independent Claims 44, 48, 50, 54, 56, and 60, it is submitted that amended independent Claims 44, 48, 50, 54, 56, and 60 are in condition for allowance.

Each of amended Claims 46, 52, and 58 recite, *inter alia*:

providing, in response to a request from a merge user  
information providing apparatus including said user  
information providing means and other user information  
providing means, *information regarding a designated user* to  
said merge user information providing apparatus.

McFadden fails to disclose or render obvious the recited providing step. As discussed above, McFadden describes maintaining synchronization between a respective user and *group records* on hub and spoke computers. Maintaining *group record* information is not information regarding a *designated user*. Accordingly, as McFadden does not disclose or suggest the features of amended independent Claims 46, 52, and 58, it is submitted that amended independent Claims 46, 52, and 58 are in condition for allowance.

Each of amended Claims 62 and 83 recite, *inter alia*:

... means for acquiring said user information *regarding a user*...  
said merge information providing apparatus *merging said acquired user information* regarding said user...

As discussed above with reference to amended Claim 1, McFadden fails to disclose or render obvious acquiring *user information regarding a user* and *merging the acquired user information regarding that user*. Accordingly, as McFadden does not disclose or suggest the features of amended independent Claims 62 and 83, it is submitted that amended independent Claims 62 and 83 and the claims depending therefrom are in condition for allowance.

Amended Claim 77 recites, *inter alia*:

means for providing user information regarding a user, said user information providing means *corresponding to a distinction information that distinguishes said user* registered to said user information providing means and/or other user information providing means to a merge user information providing apparatus in response to a request from said merge user information providing apparatus...

McFadden fails to disclose or render obvious a means for providing user information regarding a user, said user information providing means *corresponding to a distinction information that distinguishes said user* registered to said user information providing means and/or other user information providing means to a merge user information providing apparatus in response to a request from said merge user information providing apparatus. As discussed above, McFadden describes maintaining synchronization between a respective user and *group records* on hub and spoke computers. A spoke or hub database that includes *group record* information is not a user information providing means *corresponding to a distinction information that distinguishes a user*. Accordingly, as McFadden does not disclose or suggest the features of amended independent Claim 77, it is submitted that amended independent Claim 77 and the claims depending therefrom are in condition for allowance.

Each of amended Claims 100, 105, 113, 116, and 121 recite, *inter alia*:

...acquiring information *regarding a user* registered to said user information providing means...  
...merging said acquired user information regarding said user...

As discussed above with reference to amended Claim 1, McFadden fails to disclose or render obvious acquiring *user information regarding a user* and *merging the acquired user information regarding that user*. Accordingly, as McFadden does not disclose or suggest

the features of amended independent Claims 100, 105, 113, 116, and 121 it is submitted that amended independent Claims 100, 105, 113, 116, and 121 are in condition for allowance.

Each of amended Claims 103, 111, and 119 recite, *inter alia*:

...providing, in response to a request from a merge user information providing apparatus, said merge user information providing apparatus including said user information providing means and other user information providing means, *information regarding a user corresponding to distinction information* registered to said user information providing means and/or other user information providing means for distinguishing said user to said merge user information providing apparatus...

As discussed above, McFadden describes maintaining synchronization between a respective user and *group records* on hub and spoke computers. Maintaining *group record* information is not providing information *regarding a user corresponding to distinction information*. Accordingly, as McFadden does not disclose or suggest the features of amended independent Claims 103, 111, and 119, it is submitted that amended independent Claims 103, 111, and 119 are in condition for allowance.

New Claim 124 recites:

A merge information providing apparatus, comprising:  
means for receiving an acquisition request for access for a user to an information provider of a plurality of information providers;  
means for acquiring user information regarding the user from the plurality of information providers based on the acquisition request; and  
means for merging the acquired user information into merged user information.

McFadden does not disclose or suggest acquiring user information regarding a user from a plurality of information providers based on an acquisition request. Nor does McFadden disclose or suggest merging the acquired user information into merged user information. As discussed above, McFadden merely describes synchronizing multiple databases so that group membership in those databases reflect changes made to the user

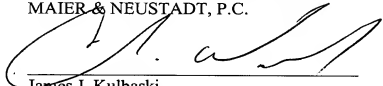
records in the user databases. Synchronizing multiple databases is not acquiring user information *regarding a user* from a plurality of information providers *based on an acquisition request* and *merging* the acquired user information into *merged user information*. Accordingly, as McFadden does not disclose or suggest the features of new Claim 124, it is submitted that new Claim 124 and the claims depending therefrom are in condition for allowance.

For the reasons discussed above, no further issues are believed to be outstanding in the present application, and the present application is believed to be in condition for formal allowance. Therefore, a Notice of Allowance for Claims 1-124 is earnestly solicited.

Should the Examiner deem that any further action is necessary to place this application in even better form for allowance, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicants' undersigned representative at the below listed telephone number.

Respectfully submitted,

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